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New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children

Agenda item 66 (*continued*)

Promotion and protection of the rights of children

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/259)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.31)

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Viera Tomanova, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of Slovakia.

Ms. Tomanova (Slovakia) (*spoke in Slovakian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): The 1990 World Summit for Children and the 2002 special session of the General Assembly on children identified the principles and goals necessary for creating good conditions for the lives of children. In 2002 Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in his opening speech to the twenty-seventh special session, addressed the children of the world: "[W]e, the grown-ups, have failed you deplorably ... We, the grown-ups, must reverse this list of failures" (*A/S-27/PV.1, p. 3*). Even many years later, we still ask ourselves if we have achieved progress in our common effort to build a world fit for children. Is this world fit for grown-ups; more importantly, is it really fit for children? Are we grown-ups responsible in our behaviour towards children? That question is directed to all of us — politicians and citizens.

It is extremely satisfying that the lives of children are the focus of attention of such an institution as the United Nations. It is however regrettable that we have to deal with this question as a continuing and unresolved problem.

The Slovak Republic is aware of the significance and importance of protecting children's rights and has applied the goals and principles of the 2002 twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children. It has started to carry out changes in the country in order to improve the conditions and protection of the rights of its children.

The basis for the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the fact that children have to be protected in exercising their rights. During the period 2002 to 2007 Slovakia carried out reforms reflected in its legislation, especially in such areas as education, social security, health care, family law, criminal law, access to information and public administration. It is very important from the point of the protection of the rights of children that the National Plan of Action for Children has been adopted. The Plan is evaluated and updated every two years, the goal being to contribute to building a good system of protection of the rights and interests of children. In order to meet the tasks of the Action Plan, both State and non-State entities participated, and individual measures were identified so that the rights and education of children will be protected. Slovakia has also adopted both Optional

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Protocols to the Convention of the Rights of the Child, one on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the other on the involvement of children in armed conflicts.

Children's rights are regulated in various types of legislation in Slovakia, including the Family Act, the act on the social legal protection of children and social guardianship, and the act on assistance in material needs. Slovakia's act on the social legal protection of children and social guardianship is creating a system of measures whereby the State guarantees protection and support to all children and families, especially in those cases when parents for various reasons are not able or willing to ensure proper childcare. The special characteristics of this legislation is its influence by family, civil and criminal law.

The relationship between the Act on social legal protection of children and social guardianship and the Family Act is particularly significant because the former regulates conditions which are the prerequisites for certain measures to be taken in the areas of social legal protection of children and social guardianship.

The legislation on the rights of the child is very important here because it is based on those rights accorded to children by the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The right of children to ask a relevant body, foreign assistance provider, municipality or accredited institution mandated to protect the interests of children goes beyond the responsibilities of those institutions. The right of the child is protected. Schools and providers of social care may be addressed. There is also an obligation for those relevant institutions to provide immediate assistance to children to protect their lives and rights. Furthermore, the legislation gives the right to children to ask for assistance without the knowledge of their parents or the persons responsible for their upbringing.

Regarding institutional care, one of the important areas of concern was to evaluate the condition of children placed not only in orphanages, but also in special boarding schools, re-education orphanages, crisis centres and children's homes. The application of this legislation has brought significant changes for children placed in institutional care.

The legislation has been positively evaluated, as the work undertaken on behalf of children has improved, as has the work with families. This has resulted in a decrease in the overall number of children placed in institutional care by court order. It is true that in some cases effective cooperation with municipalities has not been established, but municipalities' obligation to contribute financially to that care will no doubt improve their involvement.

Despite the endeavours and efforts of our country to protect the lives, health, rights and interests of children, we should not forget that in all undertakings benefiting children, we must always bear in mind that the best interests of the child should always represent the primary consideration in all such projects in order for every child to have the opportunity to develop his or her individual abilities.

I would like to underscore here that this theme is not only very important within the context of the United Nations, but also in the context of the Council of Europe, over which Slovakia is currently presiding. I would like to underscore our commitment to create a world fit for children in which sustainable human development takes into consideration the best interests of children and is based on the principles of democracy, equality, non-discrimination, peace and social justice, universality, inseparability, and the interdependence and interrelationship of all human rights, including the right to development.

We fully associate ourselves with the draft concluding declaration of this meeting (A/62/L.31), and are prepared to implement it. We are of the opinion that crimes committed against innocent children should be considered the most brutal and inhuman and that there should be zero tolerance regarding such violations of the law, as the repercussions for children are difficult to undo and represent a heavy burden for the child throughout his or her entire life. If we sanction other areas of society, we should also think of having more efficient measures to eliminate activities against those whom we should care for most — our children.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Esperanza Cabral, Minister of Social Welfare and Development of the Philippines.

Ms. Cabral (Philippines): At the outset, please allow me to express my Government's strong condemnation of the terrorist attack that took place in Algeria this morning, which left many people dead, including several United Nations staff members. The Philippines grieves for the people of Algeria, the United Nations and the families of the victims.

The message of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, was abundantly clear. Our children, while enjoying equal and inalienable rights as human beings, need special care and protection for the achievement of their full potential. We all answered that call, and today the Convention has become the most widely ratified international instrument, providing the framework for national and regional plans of action for children.

Five years have passed since the landmark United Nations special session on children, which created a common vision for "A world fit for children". Its outcome document, which complements the Millennium Declaration, is interlinked with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The ultimate objective is to create a child-friendly world where all children get the best possible start in life, have access to quality education and are afforded the opportunity to grow to their full potential. A child-friendly world is where the rights of children are respected, where democracy flourishes and where poverty is not an insurmountable barrier to human progress.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the agenda of "A world fit for children" are top goals of the Philippine Government, with the Government, the private sector, academia and the international development community having been working closely together to fulfil them since the year 2000. These same goals have been mainstreamed into the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan, 2004-2010, and in the National Plan of Action for Children, 2005-2010.

In the five-year period following the special session on children, new laws that benefit children have been enacted. These include the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003; the Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour Act of 2003; the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004; the Newborn Screening Act of 2004; and the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006.

The Philippines has experienced first-hand the value of consolidated, concerted efforts and sustained interventions to improve the situation of Filipino children. The Philippines Midterm Progress Report on the Millennium Development Goals shows the significant gains the country has made, which translates into betterment for our children.

For example, regarding primary and secondary education, achievement rates by sex generally favoured girls. The net enrolment rate for girls in primary education and at the secondary level for the school year 2005-2006 exceeded that of boys.

Clear gains have been made over the past 15 years in reducing infant mortality, which has shown a decline from 57 to 24 deaths per 1,000 live births over the past 10 years. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS has been kept well below the national target of less than 1 per cent of the population.

The 2007 Philippine MDG report shows that the country has made considerable progress, particularly in poverty reduction, nutrition, gender equality, reduction of child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, as well as in access to safe drinking water and sanitary toilet facilities. The gains for children during this period demonstrate what can be done when commitments are matched by resources and political will.

However, while our consolidated efforts have yielded promising results, critical challenges remain. Many key survival, development and protection goals that were set at the World Summit for Children and the Assembly's special session on children have yet to be met in critical areas. The Philippines intends to work harder on targets concerning access to comprehensive early childhood care and development, primary education, maternal mortality and access to reproductive health services.

Children have an important role to play in developing and implementing the agenda of "A world fit for children". We must respect their right to express themselves and to participate in matters affecting them. The Philippines has had a rich experience in actively involving children in decision-making, in advocacy, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all matters affecting their rights.

A major development in the Philippines with regard to child participation includes the adoption of the National Framework for Children's Participation. The Framework provides guideposts relative to the full participation of children in planning and implementing solutions, recognizing that children are their own best advocates. In December 2006, the Philippines hosted the first South-East Asian Children's Conference and, much in keeping with the agenda of this special session, focused on HIV/AIDS, disasters, child trafficking and quality education. The children's call to action was presented to the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations Ministers of Social Welfare and Development just a few days ago for consideration.

At the core of the agenda of "A world fit for children" is a vision of the world we want for them, an awareness of the major obstacles that prevent us from achieving that vision and the need for collective action to overcome these obstacles. We believe that a comprehensive implementation of children's rights requires the cooperation of all sectors of society. Our goals can only be achieved in partnership and solidarity, both within and among countries.

The changes needed throughout the world to protect the rights of children begin with the actions taken by all of us. Everyone must play their part — Governments, non-governmental organizations, parents, families, communities and all of civil society, including children themselves. Our shared vision unites us and the message is straightforward: only by working together, building partnerships and mobilizing resources will we turn the tide in favour of our children.

The Government of the Philippines subscribes fully to the principles and objectives of "A world fit for children" and attaches great importance to its implementation nationally and globally. We reaffirm our obligation to promote and protect the rights of children, acknowledging the legal standards set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child — a cornerstone for follow-up action to the special session on children. We urge our child delegates, as they participate in this follow-up to the special session, to continue to be important players, whose views and actions will condition the world of tomorrow, thereby leading the way to a brighter future. Let us, together, move forward in partnership to achieve our shared vision: a world worthy of its children.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Nezha Skalli, Minister of Family, Social Development and Solidarity of Morocco.

Ms. Skalli (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session and to wish him and his staff every success in the fulfilment of the presidential mandate.

I am very honoured to present Morocco's achievements following its commitments on the adoption and follow-up of the Plan of Action of "A world fit for children" since the General Assembly's special session on children, held in May 2002. Our meeting today gives us the opportunity to show the progress achieved and still being achieved, but also to underline the need to renew our efforts to protect children's rights.

The organization of this High-level Plenary Meeting devoted to the follow-up to the Plan of Action for a world fit for children is indeed a valuable opportunity to share our experiences and to compare the efforts undertaken by our countries to advance children's rights, while identifying constraints in order to better implement "A world fit for children".

The path followed by the Kingdom of Morocco in the field of human rights in general, and the efforts undertaken to promote children's rights in particular, and specifically through the national Observatory on Children's Rights, presided by Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem, allowed our country to enter the new millennium under the perspective of strengthening the state of law, while setting the issue of childhood squarely at the centre, under the directives of His Majesty King Mohammed VI.

In fulfilment of its international commitments and by virtue of the national consensus on the issue of childhood, the Kingdom of Morocco has undertaken a set of essential and qualitative reviews and amendments that integrate the concept of the best interests of children into all legal codes related to children.

Promulgations of national legislation have been followed up by a new family code that has helped Morocco to lay the foundations of a modern democratic society based on the principles of equality and justice and in which the family plays a leading role, in accordance with the international Declaration and our national plan of action under "A world fit for children". The new family code also adopted the principle of equal rights and duties between parents for forming and caring for a family. That should lead to child-rearing on an equal basis and negate all forms of discrimination based on gender.

All those reforms have culminated in the amendment of our nationality code, which grants women the right to give their nationality to their children when they are married to a foreigner.

These achievements at the legislative level have been accompanied by others at the political level, such as involving women in decision-making. That was reflected in the election of 35 women to Parliament for the first time in the year 2002. Seven women were appointed to ministerial posts, also for the first time, in the current cabinet formed two months ago.

In the context of implementing resolutions of international organizations related to the international Declaration "A world fit for children", a conference was organized to address the subject "A decade for children" that involved various Government sectors and agencies that deal with children, a group of national experts and children drawn from a children's parliament and communal councils of children. That national conference and dialogue lasted over a year and was aimed at preparing a national plan of action for children for the decade 2006-2015. A final document was presented at our eleventh national conference for the rights of children, held on 2 and 3 July 2007 under the rubric "Investment in children is a mainstay of human development".

The national plan of action, "A Morocco fit for its children", focuses on four basic priorities that must be met by the year 2015. Those priorities are guaranteeing and supporting the health of children, providing high-quality education, protecting children from all forms of violence, and combating HIV.

Together with the sectorial programme related to health and education, the Moroccan Government gives priority to child protection. Several projects have been launched in the area of social protection through child protection units to identify children in vulnerable situations and eliminate any form of violence against children, and for that purpose model units were formed to implement the project throughout the country; *Indimaj*, a programme to reintegrate street children; and *Inqad*, a programme to deal with the special conditions of girls in domestic labour.

The field of childhood and all its components require the adoption of concrete coordination mechanisms by all stakeholders, as well as a number of public programmes related to health, education, legal and social protection, and other areas related to combating poverty, exclusion, inadequate housing and better access to basic services.

That is why we are committed to ensuring that the childhood issue is integrated into the programmes of the national initiative for human development launched by His Majesty King Mohammed VI in May 2005 to promote an integrated policy to manage human development, social inclusion, integration and solidarity.

The Kingdom of Morocco is aware of the importance of all reports presented at this plenary meeting, including all information and data, and underlines the need to duplicate success stories and develop coordination mechanisms to share experiences so as to better guarantee children's rights to healthy growth, quality education and the protection necessary to ensure a Morocco fit for children.

I take this opportunity to thank all our partners and all United Nations agencies, and in particular the UNICEF office in Morocco, for their cooperation and support through the development process of our national plan of action on childhood.

I wish every success to our meeting and reiterate, on behalf of the Moroccan delegation, all my gratitude to the General Assembly for organizing this follow-up meeting. I would also like to reaffirm the strong political will of the Kingdom of Morocco to ensure continuity and undertake new efforts to promote a world of peace, security, pacific coexistence among nations — a world that rejects all forms of intolerance and violence.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Maria Rosaria Bindi, Minister of Family of Italy.

Ms. Bindi (Italy) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour for me to bear witness in this forum to the Italian Government's commitment to children and to confirm our common goal of pursuing together the welfare of girls and boys at every stage and dimension of their lives.

A world fit for children is a world fit for everyone. That sentence summarizes the spirit in which our Governments endorsed the final declaration of the 2002 special session on children. It expresses in the highest form our responsibility as adults to the world as a whole and to its future.

For Italy, that translates into the challenge of a national and international policy that recognizes the child's value, autonomy and perspective as essential assets in the promotion of more fair, shared and lasting cultural, civic and economic growth. Within the European Union and the Council of Europe, Italy is strongly committed to the implementation of the

objectives of the 2002 special session of the General Assembly. We express that commitment through our support for the various competent international organizations, particularly UNICEF, to which Italy is a top contributor.

The data contained in the report just published by UNICEF indicate that, despite the progress made, much remains to be done to achieve the 2002 objectives. The resolution on children's rights that this General Assembly will adopt in the next few days invites us to pursue our efforts towards concrete and effective protection from every form of violence and exploitation. Italy welcomes with great satisfaction the historical decision to establish the post of special representative to the Secretary-General on violence against children. Italy has long fought for an international ban on every form of corporal punishment. We hope that this goal can be clearly expressed by the General Assembly in next year's resolution on children's rights.

The commitments that Italy signed in May 2002 were confirmed that same year in a comprehensive national action plan for 2002 to 2004, which reaffirmed the centrality of a child's or young person's relationship with his or her family. I wish to recall the commitment to ensure that every child has a family. In Italy in the mid-1990s approximately 30,000 children lived in institutions. Today, thanks to a programme to close the old orphanages, approximately 13,000 children reside in quality family communities and have been placed in adoption and foster care programmes.

Italy has improved its international adoption procedures to bring them into line with The Hague convention: in the past five years, 16,137 foreign children have been welcomed into and adopted by Italian families. In the framework of development cooperation, Italy updated its Cooperation Guidelines on Issues related to Minors in 2004. It is pursuing many actions implemented in various countries of the world to fight malnutrition and infant mortality; foster basic education and social health care for minors; construct a juvenile justice system; promote the social inclusion of differently able minors; and fight the worst forms of exploitation, such as child labor, the recruitment of children in armed conflicts, sexual exploitation and trafficking.

In recent years new steps have been taken in Italy in the framework of prevention, protection and rehabilitation of children from sexual and economic exploitation and from every form of violence. This commitment has been reinforced by the approval of recent laws that increase penalties for such crimes, and by the creation of a data bank that will allow for better information, better monitoring and better prevention strategies on this complex issue.

Italy is also committed to drafting effective new measures against child labour exploitation, a central theme chosen by the General Assembly for 2008. Through the joint efforts of public institutions, employers' organizations, trade unions and non-governmental organizations, we are focusing first and foremost on reducing school drop-out rates and on a renewed awareness of its international dimensions.

As Minister of Family, I wish to underline the primary responsibility of the family — of all families — in the protection, care, growth and development of girls and boys. Therefore, it is more important than ever that this concept be included in the draft final declaration of this Meeting (A/62/L.31).

In this regard, starting in 2006, the Italian Government sought to usher in a stronger new phase of investments and actions to benefit children, adolescents and their families. Important new resources have been made available to develop a system of quality socio-educational services for children, to prevent violence and abuse, to eradicate poverty and support parenthood, and to improve the standard of living and the social integration processes of foreign minors. In fewer than two years, more than €4 billion have been invested to achieve those objectives.

We realize that our country has yet to accomplish all of its goals. For this reason, we are preparing a new national plan of action that we would like to implement through the widespread participation of civil society, non-governmental organizations and a strong proactive role for children. We have identified six priority areas of intervention. We want to promote and enhance all the forms of direct participation of children in civic life, committing national and local institutions to this end. We intend to forge an education pact to foster the growth and autonomy of children as people. We are convinced that education is a common good that demands a common effort. It is a matter of the utmost urgency that we act decisively to reduce child poverty.

Italy has transformed itself from a country of emigration into one of immigration. Illegal

immigration raises new issues that Italy wishes to address by drawing inspiration from the principles of legality and solidarity. We are committed to promoting actions for foreign minors that take into account the age, gender, ethnic or religious background of children, especially those who are of Roma or Sinti ethnicity, in the framework of an integrated approach, which protects children and respects the principle of family unity.

We are considering a reform of the judicial system to strengthen the protection of children and families through the appointment of special judges. We wish to strengthen the network of high-quality social, health and educational services to assure a consistent nationwide level of services.

We need to recognize children and adolescents as protagonists of and participants in the choices that regard them. We need to get past the idea of the child as a problem, as the passive object of adults' actions or worse, as the property of its family. Such an approach views children merely in terms of their becoming adults in an unspecified future rather than as a reality of today.

Instead, we need to promote a policy that responds effectively to emergencies and rights that are still denied, but that is also capable of accompanying and promoting the normalcy of children's lives. That is why we need to give a voice to children — boys and girls — and to listen to them. Only in this way can we recognize their full citizenship and open the way to a new pedagogy of human development that will help all of us, both children and adults, to build a better world together.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency João Baptista Kussumua, President of the National Council of Children, Minister for Social Assistance and Reintegration of Angola.

Mr. Kussumua (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): On behalf of my Government and my people, I would like to express my condolences to the victims resulting from the violence in Algiers today, and their families.

On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to welcome the work of this special Meeting on children. This Meeting is of particular importance for Angola due to the fact that most of its population is young. Some 60 per cent of Angolans are under the age of 18. Assuring the well-being of this young segment of the population and protecting their fundamental rights is an imperative and strategic goal of the Government. Within the framework of its national programme of action for the follow-up, development and protection of the child, as recommended by the 1990 world Summit for Children, the Government of Angola submitted its 2003 and 2004 reports to the committee monitoring the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

In June 2004, the Government held the first national forum on early childhood care and development in Angola, during which 10 commitments were assumed for the fulfillment of children's rights. In September 2004, the Council of Ministers established an Interministerial Commission for Coordination of Early Childhood Related Activities, comprising 16 ministerial sectors and the National Children's Institute, mainly aimed at promoting initiatives in favour of children under 5 years of age. The three-day Forum on Early Childhood Care and Development conducted in June this year, discussed measures that will contribute to the application of article 30 of the constitution, which stipulates that children are an absolute priority, for which reason they should enjoy the special protection of the family, State and society with a view to their full development.

Last April, the Government approved the establishment of the National Children's Council, as an instrument to evaluate, follow-up and monitor the execution of the national child protection and development policy and the actions of local organs responsible for its execution. Being a legal entity with financial and administrative autonomy, the Council is composed of 35 counsellors, 17 of whom are representatives of the Government and 18 representatives of civil society, thus reflecting the fact that it is the outcome of a transparent, dynamic and broad process.

Since 2002, the Government of Angola has been implementing a new strategy to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic, with the creation of a national AIDS commission. In 2004, it approved the AIDS Act, setting out the legal provisions for the protection of children against stigmatization and discrimination, which led to the creation of the National AIDS Institute in 2005. According to studies conducted in 2004, the average HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Angola is within the

range of 3.9 per cent, which is relatively low when compared to those of other countries in the region.

One of the priorities of the Government of Angola is strengthening national capacities to revitalize and ensure the provision of essential services benefiting women and children. In that regard, by 2005, we intend to have a broad strategic plan to reduce infant and maternal mortality rates and to promote healthy living. We hope by 2009 to reduce by 50 per cent the current mortality rate of children under the age of 5; reduce by 30 per cent the rate of malnutrition of children under the age of 5; and reduce by 30 per cent the maternal mortality rate.

We also wish to promote healthy living, and our efforts in this area include a national maternal and infant mortality reduction strategy plan for 2004 to 2008. The Government recognizes that access to drinking water and hygienic conditions are prerequisites for the improvement of public health and the reduction of morbidity and mortality rates. In September, the National Water Act brought about reforms in public policy in the sanitation sector and increased partnerships in the integrated management of water resources, which are translating into wider coverage and access of the population to drinking water.

Ensuring the well-being of children does not simply mean preserving their health, but also providing a solid education to make them a future agent of national development. The Government is implementing educational reforms aimed at, inter alia, guaranteeing quality universal basic education for all children from six to 18 years of age and strengthening the capacity and quality of the teachers.

With the support of UNICEF, Angola's National Children's Institute is coordinating multisectoral initiatives to combat child trafficking in certain parts of the country. Furthermore, the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Plan of Action and Intervention Strategy is also being reviewed in order to propose measures that are better suited to the problems of our days and strengthen the Government's strategy in this area.

In order to give greater attention to and provide better treatment for child violence cases, in particular violence against females, a department dealing with violence against women and children was created at Angola's National Criminal Investigation Directorate.

Since the achievement of peace in 2002, Angola has taken decisive steps towards enhancing the living conditions of the population, both in resource mobilization and in providing more effective and careful management of resources for the achievement of the goals of a world fit for children. We believe that child promotion strategies require a policy to fight against poverty. It affects women, which is why it has a negative impact on children. Thus, one of the development policy priorities in Angola is to ensure the well-being of the population by reducing poverty.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the firm commitment of His Excellency the President and head of Government of Angola, Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, always maintaining the condition of the Angolan child at the centre of his attention and programmes. My delegation hopes that the declaration and plan of action to be adopted at the end of this session will effectively serve the interests of our children worldwide and strengthen our firm determination to fulfil our responsibilities for their full achievement.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency 'Mathabiso Angeline Lepono, Minister of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mrs. Lepono (Lesotho): I join other delegations in conveying my heartfelt condolences to the people of Algeria regarding the tragedy that befell them this morning.

Allow me to extend fraternal greetings from the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho. Allow me also to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly.

Five years ago, we met in a similar fashion to commit ourselves to the creation of a world fit for children. We were inspired by the belief that, should we create circumstances conducive to the mental, physical, social and economic development of our children, we would have done our part in the development of a prosperous future community. To that end, we adopted a Plan of Action and agreed to meet five years down the line to review our progress and recommit ourselves to our noble goals.

The Kingdom of Lesotho remains committed to the ideals and goals we adopted five years ago. I say

that with authority, for I led our delegation to the General Assembly's special session on children in 2002 and I am currently still the Minister responsible for the coordination of children's affairs in Lesotho. That has allowed me to oversee the national processes that are leading to the achievement of a Lesotho fit for children, and therefore an Africa fit for children and, indeed, a world fit for children. As will be apparent from my statement, the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho has made considerable progress in creating a country fit for children and honouring the commitments it undertook in 2002.

Allow me also to mention that the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho, led by His Majesty King Letsie III, under the able advice of the Government, led by the Right Honourable Prime Minister, Mr. Pakalitha Mosisili, adopted a national vision, aptly termed Vision 2020. This national vision embraces the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on which the Plan of Action for a world fit for children is based. In other words, the Kingdom of Lesotho has incorporated the Millennium Development Goals and the Plan of Action into its national policies. Theoretically, that would be an achievement worthy of applause. However, real change in our children's circumstances is the ultimate goal.

Allow me to briefly highlight a few examples that illustrate the Kingdom of Lesotho's resolve to create a world fit for children. Children are the most vulnerable members of society, due mainly to their dependence on their elders in society for mental and physical sustenance. Continual exploitation for economic and social purposes continues to plague the development of our children.

To combat this trend, the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho enacted the Sexual Offences Act of 2003. This milestone Act aims at protecting children and women from sexual abuse and exploitation. The Act defines, in a very clear manner, acts that were previously not considered to be sexual offences as such. It increases the penalties for common law offences and newly defined offences for the purposes of deterrence.

The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho introduced a free primary education programme in 2000, using a one year, or one or cohort, at a time approach. In 2006, the Government achieved the goal of State-sponsored primary education. The challenge that remains is to sustain this achievement, taking into consideration the economic situation that we are in. As a least developed country, my country is continually grappling with the problem of sustaining programmes needed for the economic, political and social development of our citizenry. Hence our persistent clarion call to our development partners for support towards sustainable economic growth that would lead to economic independence.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Before I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not express our gratitude to UNICEF and our development partners. Heads of State or Government of Africa and the European Union met recently in Portugal for the European Union-Africa Summit where they committed themselves to mutual economic and social growth. In the same spirit, I urge us all to work towards the achievement of a world fit for children through the Plan of Action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Catherine Fonck, Minister of Health, Childhood and Youth Assistance of the Government of the French Community of Belgium.

Ms. Fonck (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): The United Nations deserves praise for planning this High-level Meeting. Five years after the adoption of the Declaration and Plan of Action contained in the document "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), the moment had come to assess the achievements accomplished in the context of its implementation.

In these five years, real progress has been made, but new challenges have also arisen. At a time when globalization has intensified, the situation of children remains critical, with persistent poverty; pandemics such as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis; armed conflicts that claim child soldiers among their victims; and environmental degradation linked, inter alia, to climate change.

Following the May 2002 special session on children, Belgium adopted a national plan of action for children. This sets the priorities related to children's rights for the coming years. In addition, Belgium very recently established a National Commission for Children's Rights, whose statute, mandate, and composition reflect the criteria and expectations of the

United Nations. The Commission is a true platform for discussion that is broadly inclusive and open to the participation of civil society. It provides civil society with an appropriate forum for calling for and motivating action by public authorities in the area of protecting and promoting children's rights. The voice of civil society, of those who work every day for the well-being of children, will from now on be indispensable.

The question of the participation of children and taking into account what they have to say is a fundamental one, including for the most vulnerable children, such as those who are disabled or very sick. That is why in Belgium now children are as often as possible heard in divorce proceedings on matters of concern to them. In addition, in Belgium, each level of power is seeking to strengthen the participation of children and young people where they live. This strengthening of participation can be seen through local and regional consultative commissions for children and young people, where they are invited to state their views on policy projects that affect them directly or indirectly.

The participation of young people and children is also fully seen in non-governmental youth organizations at all socio-cultural levels, where children are invited to experience responsible, active, critical, and united citizenship. These policies fit seamlessly into the priorities of the European Union in youth matters.

I therefore particularly applaud the genuine participation of children and youth in the Children's Forum, this Plenary Meeting and the round tables.

For us, there is no contradiction between giving children the opportunity to have an effect on their own lives and on society and preserving the role to be played by adults. Limits and points of reference too are necessary for the development of the child.

Combating violence against children is another priority. In Belgium, efforts have been made by the justice system and the psycho-medico-social systems in order to mobilize the expertise necessary to keep children from any act of abuse. Regional platforms for cooperation have been set up so that various actors in the fight against child abuse can coordinate their approaches. In our country, the activities of the Child Focus Association provide an example of an original partnership established between public authorities and the private sector with regard to international child abductions, disappearances, sexual exploitation and child pornography, in particular on the Internet.

In parallel with these measures, Belgium authorities are resolutely committed to a family policy focusing on well-being. Success in education does not depend only on parents, but also on the will of institutions to validate and value parental responsibility. To this end, parent support programmes have been set up and refined with a view to taking a positive and supportive approach to families.

Defending and promoting the rights of children internationally can only be done through solidarity and by building cooperation among nations. That is the purpose of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as of The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. This Convention represents an outstanding effort of international cooperation among States of origin and receiving States. Countries of origin have obtained recognition of the subsidiarity of adoption, the adoption of measures that make it difficult for child traffickers and guarantees as to the quality of adoptive parents. Receiving countries, thanks to the partnership that has thus been forged, here obtained guarantees that adoption will take place in the best interests of the child.

This major progress in the rights of the child — as reflected in Belgium in the reform of the adoption process — has come up against a lack of understanding by many people who are in the process of adopting children and other members of the public, who have difficulty accepting lengthier adoption procedures and the relaxed limitation on the number of adoptable children. Despite such criticism, we have pursued our policies in the best interests of children above all others.

The twenty-first century will be, more than preceding ones, a century of challenges, among which the well-being of children is crucial. Since 1989, considerable progress has been achieved, but it is not enough. I appeal to countries that have not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child to do so. Children's rights, however, are not limited to the ratification of conventions. They involve daily actions called for by parents, teachers, educators or political officials. We should ask ourselves what kind of world we are leaving to our children, but, more than that, we

must ask ourselves what kind of children we want to leave to our world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Sharifa bint Khalfan bin Nasser Al-Yahyai, Minister of Social Development of Oman.

Ms. Al-Yahyai (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to convey to all representatives the greetings of the Government and the people of the Sultanate of Oman, who welcome the convening of this international meeting to evaluate and improve the action of States and to renew the commitments undertaken at the local and international levels to make our world fit for our children who are the future of humankind.

We are gathered today to follow up the international community's achievements with respect to the document entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27, annex). We are well aware of the problems besetting our world and their dimensions, sources and ramifications, and we know that the first victims of these problems are children and their families, who constitute the foundations of the international community. We are also aware of the major challenges that we are facing, which can be overcome only by renewed commitments and pledges.

Our commitments and ongoing efforts to improve the lives and promote the rights of children and of humankind are enhanced by the lofty teachings of our Islamic religion and the noble guidance of our Islamic sharia law. We are convinced that the best course of action is to care for children in order to establish a stable society where human rights are promoted for all people and all age groups.

Based on our conviction and our commitment to the international community's efforts to achieve growth and a better future for children, the Omani national committee on children's affairs has been cooperating with international programmes and measures to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child since Oman's accession to the Convention in 1996.

We have been making every effort to provide a healthy environment for children. These efforts are summarized in a document entitled "An Oman fit for children", which is linked to the Millennium Development Goals. We ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2004, and in 2005 we submitted our second national report on the implementation of the Convention. We are exerting our utmost efforts to devise a national strategy on children.

Returning to the purpose of our gathering — to improve upon the action undertaken to date in line with "A world fit for children" — allow me to offer some examples of the efforts undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman. In the area of health, we have been making every effort to provide life-long health care for all citizens and residents in the Sultanate. We have placed major emphasis on prevention of disease. On 1 December, we started the implementation of a national strategy on HIV/AIDS.

In the field of child protection, we wish to emphasize that we have established a workshop to review Omani legislation; this will pave the way to enacting an Omani bill on children that will take into consideration the relevant international conventions. We have also established informal task forces to study child exclusion and neglect so that such situations can be remedied.

With regard to education, the enrolment age has been reduced from 6 years to 5 years and 10 months in public schools, and to 5 and a half years in private schools. Primary school enrolment reached 92.1 per cent in 2003-2004, rising from 86.6 in 1993-1994; this represents an increase of 0.62 per cent. We also attach great importance to pre-school education, and have increased the number of kindergartens in the Sultanate. We stress the importance of listening to the voices of children in establishing programmes to formulate policies and programmes relating to them.

In closing, I wish to place maximum emphasis on the goal of our gathering, which is to improve our action, in order to achieve a loftier goal: to make our world truly fit for children.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Askar Shakirov, National Ombudsman of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Shakirov (Kazakhstan): It is indisputable that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), are fundamental and comprehensive documents on the protection of the rights of the child, and that they play a central role in

this area. We attach great importance to that session and its outcome document, and we welcome this five-year review of the special session and endorse the draft declaration to be adopted at the end of the present High-level Plenary Meeting.

The international community has made significant progress since the special session. However, it is obvious that that progress remains insufficient to improve the status of children around the world and to enable us to attain the objectives set out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Plan of Action contained in "A world fit for children" and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The practical implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of "A world fit for children" depends largely on the political will and economic capacity of United Nations Member States and on the effectiveness of the international assistance provided to countries in need.

The implementation of these key documents is a priority of my country's internal policy. Kazakhstan takes a multisectoral approach to the promotion of children's rights and interests. The process involves Government agencies, our human rights ombudsman, national non-governmental organizations and youth movements, which cooperate closely with one another.

Over the past five years, the Government of Kazakhstan has been strengthening the national legal framework for the protection of children. My country is enhancing its legislation and creating conditions conducive to teaching and educating children, protecting their health and providing them with social assistance. Budgetary allocations for the development of children are doubled each year. In 2006, expenditures devoted to the social protection of children constituted 41.3 per cent of the national budget. I should like to stress once again that approximately 99 per cent of the children of Kazakhstan are covered by compulsory primary education and that there is no gender disparity in education levels.

In keeping with the recommendation made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in response to Kazakhstan's initial report under the Convention, the Government of Kazakhstan has established a committee on child protection within the Ministry of Education and Science. Our national human rights plan ensures the inclusion of children's rights as a subject in school and university curricula. The Preschool Childhood national research centre, has been founded in Kazakhstan. The centre's main objective is the formulation and implementation of a preschool education strategy and the analysis and study of that subject. A national child protection programme for 2007-2011 sets out basic strategic policy guidelines on the promotion and protection of children's rights and establishes an effective system providing legal and social guarantees to children of all categories. Approximately $49 million has already been allocated for the initial stage of the strategy's implementation.

Kazakhstan condemns all forms of violence against children. We believe that the conclusions and recommendations contained in Mr. Pinheiro's landmark study on violence against children (see A/61/299) constitute a good basis for the efforts of Member States and the United Nations system to ensure effective prevention of violence against children and the protection of all children from violence.

We are implementing a 2006-2008 Government plan of action to combat and prevent crimes involving human trafficking. Thirty-eight crisis centres have been established for women and children who are victims of violence. A law aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency, child neglect and child homelessness has been adopted. Earlier this year, the local government authorities in each district of the country established separate departments on the protection of children's rights.

Kazakhstan has been consistent in its efforts to ensure further development of its social services system, which must meet the needs of disadvantaged and disabled children and must support families with children. However, despite those efforts, disabled children, child abandonment, juvenile delinquency and child neglect remain serious problems. Child mortality continues to be a matter of great concern. The spread of HIV/AIDS is an emerging challenge to the country.

The Government of Kazakhstan is tackling these problems in close cooperation with international organizations and with United Nations specialized agencies such as UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNESCO.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm once again our strong commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and to the Convention on the Rights

of the Child. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children" (A/62/259), failure to achieve the goals agreed upon at the 2002 special session on children will significantly undermine efforts to achieve the MDGs. Therefore, we cannot fail to honour the commitments and promises that we have made in order to build a world fit for children.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Hijran Huseynova, Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs of Azerbaijan.

Ms. Huseynova (Azerbaijan): Permit me to express, on behalf of the delegation of Azerbaijan, our condolences with regard to the tragedy that took place in Algeria. We share the grief of the families of the victims.

It is my honour and privilege to address this Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the organizers for making this important event happen. I would also like to thank the United Nations, in particular its specialized agencies, for their valuable assistance and support in our national efforts to protect the rights of children, which in turn contribute to the strengthening of democratic society in Azerbaijan.

The Government of Azerbaijan does its best to secure a safe and peaceful present and future for our children. That can be seen from the legislative and administrative reforms carried out recently in our country, as well as from our implementation of international documents. It is worth pointing out that one of the first conventions that Azerbaijan ratified was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 2006, the President of Azerbaijan issued a decree on the establishment of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs. The State Committee determines and regulates national policy related to children's issues and supervises its implementation. We have also established a coordination council on children's issues, in keeping with one of the most important recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Earlier this year, the State Committee elaborated a national action plan on children and submitted it to the Cabinet of Ministers. On 1 June 2007, with the support of UNICEF, a Children's Parliament was established in Azerbaijan; it includes 85 representatives from throughout the country.

Like many other countries, we are especially concerned about the problem of children infected with HIV/AIDS. In order to promote preventive measures, the National AIDS Centre is conducting awareness-raising campaigns, with a special focus on the regions of Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijan Government has adopted a plan of action to address the problems of homeless children and street children. Supporting children with special needs is another priority of our Government. We have recently established rehabilitation centres for children and support centres for families and children, and 163 children with disabilities have been integrated into inclusive education programmes.

In spite of the Government's strong will to take all steps necessary to protect and guarantee children's rights in our country, it has proved harder to make progress in the face of the occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia. As a result of that aggression, over 1 million people have become refugees and displaced persons, 200,000 of whom are children, who are the most vulnerable group of the population. Azerbaijan implements special programmes with the assistance of the United Nations specialized agencies to promote the integration of that sector of the population into normal life.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Today in Azerbaijan, 202 non-governmental organizations working in the children's sphere have been registered by the Ministry of Justice. One, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, headed by the first lady of Azerbaijan, Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva, is a leading organization in that sphere. Among the most successful projects implemented by the Foundation are those known as "Optimal Care for Diabetic Children", "For a Life without Thalassemia", and "A New School for the New Azerbaijan", dedicated to building and renovating about 300 hundred schools, including those in the most remote regions, and equipping them with all the necessary modern equipment. Taking into account the importance of family for every child, the President of

Azerbaijan approved a State programme on deinstitutionalization and alternative care 2006-2015.

I believe all will agree with me that one of the main components of a world fit for children is providing them with access to quality education, as also enshrined in our Constitution. With respect to our commitments to child protection, legislative reforms conducted in our country should be specifically mentioned. Among those, legislative acts envisioning preventive measures and provisions against child trafficking, the protection of children from abuse and exploitation, and the prohibition of child pornography are important achievements in reforming national legislation.

A law on domestic violence has been elaborated by our committee and submitted to the National Parliament for adoption. The law includes special provisions on protecting children against violence occurring in the family. We also intend to regulate the problem of early marriage with relevant amendments to the family code, which are also recommended by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Naturally, along with the positive trends, we face certain problems in that sphere, such as an insufficiency of trained social workers. The State has already taken appropriate measures to fill that gap. A social work degree programme has been opened at Baku State University, and we intend to launch similar degree programmes at other universities within a few years. The experience of international experts in that field would be very helpful.

Many of the problems mentioned are common, I think, not only to Azerbaijan, but to many countries. We are open to and hope to continue our cooperation with international organizations, United Nations agencies, and governmental and non-governmental organizations for creating a world fit for children. We can take action on a global scale, which is critical to meeting all the Millennium Development Goals.

In conclusion, I would like, on behalf of the Azerbaijani delegation, to express once more our gratitude for the opportunity to be here, and wish all participants success.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Fatimetou Mint Khattri, Minister for Promotion of Women, Children and Family Affairs of Mauritania.

Ms. Mint Khattri (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to express my solidarity with and deep condolences to the families of the victims of the attack that took place today in Algeria.

I also congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his leadership of this Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children, held in May 2002 under the rubric "A world fit for children".

I should also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his very thorough report and his tireless efforts via all specialized United Nations agencies, and in particular UNICEF, to promote the cause of children in the context of the Millennium Development Goals.

The question of children in general has always held pride of place in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. In that respect, we have closely followed or participated in all international and regional events. We ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child at an early stage and have brought our legislation and development programmes into line with the Convention's commitments and provisions. Our efforts were consolidated through reform of the electoral process in the holding of democratic and transparent presidential, legislative and municipal elections, ushering in a new era based on a multi-party State, State institutions, justice, human rights, national unity — all factors in promoting the sustainable development that benefits all sectors of society.

Legislation criminalizing slavery and promoting the return of Mauritanians affected by human trafficking is part of my country's historical commitment to its promises. It has been supported by national consensus, burnishing the credibility of the State and Government among their partners, as reflected in the donors meeting in Paris, the results of which were beyond everyone's expectations. The commitments of donors exceeded by more than half a billion dollars what we expected, which has opened new prospects for children in general through educational and health programmes aimed at enhancing public services such as water and electricity improving the quality of life and mitigating poverty.

Since the May 2002 special session, we have worked to promote a legislative framework for children and to strengthen the capacities of various sectors to respond to children's needs in an integrated fashion. The State secretariat for children has been raised to the level of a ministry, and the establishment of a children's welfare institution has improved conditions for children.

Our legislation has been enriched by a series of new laws, including on the protection of children, the punishment of those who exploit them, the prohibition of slavery and slavery-like practices. Those qualitative legislative advances have been accompanied by deep reforms in our judicial system that have strengthened the independence of the judiciary from the executive branch. The State has also worked to protect children from trafficking, exploitation, prostitution and pornography. The Government recently developed a strategy framework integrating the child dimension into all programmes so as to create an atmosphere conducive to the welfare of children.

Our family policies have been revised and our national policy for children is being modified at this time. A 10-year education plan has also been implemented, making it possible to narrow the gender gap in education enrolment in 2005 to 94.7 per cent for boys and 92.4 per cent for girls. We are now trying to improve the quality of life for children in the fields of education and health. Those efforts include promoting access to medical care, which has been considerably improved despite the high rate of maternal and child mortality.

Those programmes have been accompanied by outreach policies on nutrition and protection against sexually transmitted diseases. They also include awareness about the dangers of mines and efforts at demining, outreach and awareness campaigns concerning the rights of children, and the details of international conventions and the family code. These efforts aim ultimately at alleviating the domestic burden on women.

Women have been making great political progress in Mauritania and represent 20 per cent of both chambers of parliament and more than 33 per cent of municipal councils, in addition to their presence in the diplomatic arena, where they occupy high-level administrative and diplomative posts and are involved with the rights of children. For the first time, they have become heads of mission.

We are broadly implementing education programmes that are directed towards the family and local communities. We have also created a children's parliament, which has held its first meeting and met with the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister. The children's parliament has effectively staffed apprenticeships to work on the issue of democracy, thus inculcating those ideals among young people.

I have just provided a succinct account of the success achieved in my country in issues of concern to children. Like other countries, we need international partnerships and the contribution of United Nations bodies, in particular UNICEF, in order to produce the resources necessary to support our projects and programmes. Our country is thus working to create a promising atmosphere for its children in a world where countries with weak economies are finding it impossible to meet the basic needs of children.

I wish all countries every success with this task.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Aghvan Vardanian, Minister of Labour and Social Issues of Armenia.

Mr. Vardanian (Armenia) (*spoke in Russian*): I wish at the outset to welcome all those gathered here and to thank the organizers of this meeting for this opportunity to speak.

I wish to confirm our commitment to the aims and mission of the Declaration "A world fit for children". The Government of Armenia has consistently undertaken actions to protect and ensure the well-being of children of our country and to create a society based on the principles of democracy, equality, peace and social justice.

Trends in the social development of contemporary Armenian society bear witness to the fact that the aim of our state social policy is to create conditions to ensure a decent life and free development of the child.

One criterion for evaluating legislative progress in recent years with regard to protecting the rights of children is the adoption and implementation of a national programme to protect the rights of children to the year 2015. The programme is based on our

commitment to meeting the basic needs of children, their social well-being, education, and health care, and includes provisions on their legal and humane treatment.

One genuine achievement in protecting the rights of and fulfilling our obligations towards children has been the creation of a three-tiered system for protecting those rights and interests in the Republic of Armenia. The system is comprised of organs of local government and departments for the protection of children's rights in the administrative structures of the 11 regions and a national commission for the protection of children.

It should be noted in particular that, in the family code adopted in 2004, a special chapter is devoted to the rights of children and provides the right of the child to live and be brought up in a family, the right to property, the right to protection from violence and the right to free expression. One priority of the programme's social policy is to reduce infant mortality, the indices of which are now showing positive movement. In that context, it can be affirmed that Armenia's social policy on children is in harmony with provisions and decisions defining the importance of childhood to all subsequent stages of human life, the decisive role of education and its availability to all children, ensuring their well-being and health, and the need to protect them from violence.

Priority allocations from the State budget are now financing the social sphere and the development of human resources. That is corroborated by the fact that 46 per cent of the State budget for 2008 is devoted to expenses in the social sphere. On the whole, we are planning major future investments in education, social welfare, social insurance and health care. We also intend to increase budgetary expenditures in the area of education by almost 20 per cent and to increase the resources available to the family allowance by 12 per cent.

In addressing the problems currently facing children, the Government is working closely with international organizations. We are particularly grateful to UNICEF for its effective cooperation and assistance. Armenia also actively participates in promoting the rights of children at the regional level. The Council of Europe programme known as "Building a Europe for and with children" is being effectively implemented, including through the elaboration of a new convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and violence.

There can be no doubt that many social problems have been resolved in recent years. The social sphere is a matter of priority for Armenia, and in 2012 we intend to double our investment in that area.

Of course, there remain a number of unsolved problems with regard to the protection of children's rights, but where there is a will and a desire on the part of States and society, there is an opportunity for those problems to be completely resolved.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Hadja Fatoumata Tété Nabé, Minister of Social Affairs, Advancement of Women and Childhood of Guinea.

Ms. Tété Nabé (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the delegation of Guinea, which I have the honour of heading, I wish transmit to the President of the Assembly our appreciation for the manner in which he continues to lead the work of the General Assembly and to convey our particular thanks for the convening of this Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children.

I should also like to extend to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon the support and encouragement of His Excellency General Lansana Conté, President of the Republic, and of its Prime Minister and Head of Government, Mr. Lansana Kouyaté, for the initiatives taken and the efforts made in conducting the affairs of this Organization.

My delegation thanks the high-level representatives for their introductory comments guiding our work. We endorse the statement made by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the African Union, and we join in the messages of solidarity and sympathy extended to the Government and the people of Algeria, struck today by a cowardly terrorist attack.

Five years ago, in adopting resolution S-27/2, "A world fit for children", world leaders assessed progress achieved and identified obstacles to be overcome and measures to undertake to ensure the effective implementation of the objectives established by the international community in implementing their common commitments for children. By organizing this plenary meeting, the international community is renewing its commitment and showing greater

determination to ensure a better future for children. My delegation therefore welcomes the report of the Secretary-General, which refers to a number of challenges and includes a variety of recommendations on measures to take for achieving greater progress.

The four objectives of the special session devoted to children strengthen the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which help focus attention on the rights of children. Despite the progress achieved, we believe that the collective and individual action of a number of actors in the international community are still essential in order to strengthen legal norms, partnerships and financing for educational, social, cultural and economic programmes for children.

My country, the Republic of Guinea, which participated actively in the special session of 2002, had the opportunity to share the progress achieved in implementing the decisions of the World Summit for Children. Since then, the Government has initiated a number of actions, which, with the support of national and international partners, have begun to have a positive effect.

The provisions taken by the Government in implementing the Declaration and Plan of Action for A world fit for children have focused, inter alia, on promoting a better and healthier existence for children, primarily by combating abuse, exploitation, violence and intolerable forms of child labour. All this involves and requires quality education for girls and children living in difficult situations, in particular those from rural areas. The progress achieved, which is discussed in the report that Guinea submitted to the African Union, with a copy sent to UNICEF, represents the measures taken by the Government with the support of its partners.

The Republic of Guinea, along with its development partners, within the framework of the main activities to achieve the MDGs, and in order to meet the objectives of the Declaration and Plan of Action of A world fit for children, has drafted a document on national strategies to reduce poverty, which focuses on economic growth, access to social and basic services and improving governance. My country has also participated number of regional and subregional initiatives, including the meeting in July 2006 organized by the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States, which brought together 26 West and Central African States and led to the signing of a resolution against child trafficking.

Despite progress achieved at all levels, it must be noted that there are still a number of important challenges to be met. We are duty-bound to ensure A world fit for children and we will only meet that goal if we work together to preserve peace and promote effective development. Here, my delegation would like to thank its bilateral and multilateral partners, in particular UNICEF, for their support. We would underscore the importance of cooperation among Governments, as well as with non-governmental organizations, civil society and other actors, so that everyone can shoulder their respective responsibilities in preserving an environment in which growth and development for children is ensured in a world of peace, security and prosperity. My delegation, which hopes that the efforts being undertaken will lead to conclusive results, will spare no effort to offer its modest contribution to our common efforts to build a world in which children will be better protected and able to flourish.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Kirsys Fernández de Valenzuela, Minister of State for Children of the Dominican Republic.

Ms. Fernández de Valenzuela (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the people and the Government of the Dominican Republic, and in particular on behalf of its children and young people, I welcome this opportunity to briefly share some of the progress and challenges in our national efforts to meet the goals enshrined in the Plan of Action of "A world fit for children".

The purpose of this special meeting is to assess the promising actions to improve the quality of life of children worldwide. According to assessments, important progress has been achieved in improving vital areas of the physical, social, emotional and spiritual progress of children and adolescents in our countries.

The Dominican Republic has signed legal, ethical and social commitments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Millennium Development Goals, the 10 principles of the Declaration that has brought us here today and, consequently, its Plan of

Action. In that context, we would underscore the following achievements and challenges.

We have established a new law in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We have left behind the old focus on guardianship that prevailed in previous regulations. Law 136/03 differentiates between the social issues of children and adolescents and conflicts of a criminal nature and therefore provides specific ways to formulate measures for protection and prevention. The law also considers the issues of intersectoral coordination, planning and supervision of action, as well as participation and the restoration of rights.

However, ensuring that all elements of the law are implemented effectively and become efficient instruments for the preparation and implementation of policies remains among the major challenges.

The Dominican Republic is one of the seven pilot countries in the United Nations Millennium Project. We are the first Latin American nation to complete an assessment of requirements and costs for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At present, we have a national commission to monitor compliance with the MDGs, headed by the President of the Republic and which includes United Nations agencies operating in the country.

To achieve the MDGs, the Dominican Government established in 2005 a category of protected programmes. In the area of health the goals achieved include a reduction in infant mortality of children under the age of 5 and an improvement in maternal health. We are combating HIV/AIDS and working to ensure a sustainable environment. Those four measures receive funding for some 15 programmes which are part of the national income budget and public spending law.

In the area of health and education, public spending has increased progressively. In 2004, both areas represented 2.75 per cent of our gross national product; this year they represent 4.37 per cent. There has also been a sustained increase in public investment to alleviate poverty through innovative programmes.

Within the framework of a social cohesion strategy, the Dominican Government is committed to meeting the MDGs. However, the underlying causes of social exclusion and inequality continue to have a negative impact on the full enjoyment of the rights of children and adolescents. According to the UNDP Human Development Report of 2005, there was a high concentration of income and wealth in the Dominican Republic and that has had a negative impact on progress in the area of human development. The Government is aware of that and has therefore improved social investment.

In order to ensure sustainable achievements Governmental and institutional support is required in creating and implementing fiscal and public spending policies. We must also monitor interventions aimed at goal-oriented results.

The National Action for Children Commission, a leading body over which I am honoured to preside, is planning next year to focus our efforts on designing and implementing an information and monitoring system for children. As part of meeting our major challenges it is important that all public policies — especially economic policies — have a positive impact on children and adolescents based on their development needs and their best interests. It is especially important that we increase social investment and strengthen institutional capacities at the central and local government levels.

Our priorities continue to focus on developing mechanisms for the protection system; redoubling our efforts to improve the quality of life, in particular with regard to child development and survival; improving education; providing comprehensive quality care for newborns; increasing basic social services with a focus on vulnerable groups, particularly those suffering from HIV/AIDS; continuing to combat child abuse and the worst forms of child labour, focusing on the needs of children living in the street; and promoting greater participation.

In alliance with agencies providing cooperation, in particular with guidance from the country programme 2007-2011 between UNICEF and the State, the Dominican Republic will continue to endeavour to achieve the objectives of the Plan of Action of "A world fit for children".

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Montserrat Gil Torné, Minister of Health, Welfare, Family and Housing of Andorra.

Mrs. Gil Torné (Andorra) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to join in the expressions of condolences to the

victims of the attack in Algeria this morning and their families.

The Principality of Andorra gives high priority to the rights of children in the development of our public policy. Six years ago, my country participated actively in the campaign "Say Yes for Children", and Andorra was represented at the highest level at the May 2002 special session of the General Assembly on children. Continuing to meet our commitment to the rights of children and our commitments to this Organization, I am pleased to announce the recent submission of our report on developments in Andorra covering the first five years of the strategy under "A world fit for children". The report includes important milestones in implementing this United Nations strategy, such as a law on children that is now being drawn up, as well as the drafting of a plan of action for children which has been elaborated with the assistance of the Andorra UNICEF Committee.

Other important steps have been taken by Andorra in protecting the rights of children. They are related to the four cross-cutting objectives set out in "A world fit for children". First, we are promoting healthy lifestyles. Encouraging nutritional health and physical exercise is one of the priorities on which we have focused in our country.

During the years 2004 and 2005 a number of surveys were carried out on child health and the nutritional habits of the Andorran population, as a result of which the Ministry of Health, Welfare, Family and Housing, together with the Ministry of Education, launched this year a strategy to promote healthy eating habits and exercise among children. One of the initial actions arising from this strategy was to disseminate educational materials to schools, libraries and institutions for young people. We expect that the strategy will be further developed during the coming five years.

Combating drug addiction, in particular among the youngest, is one of the major challenges in our societies. For that reason, we inaugurated in 2004 a national plan against drug addiction. Last year there was a considerable increase in the activities undertaken under the plan and a significant increase in the number of activities, including seminars and discussions between children and professionals working with them.

With regard to combating HIV/AIDS, Andorra has engaged in efforts to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In 2004 we set up an anonymous registry to determine the number of existing cases of AIDS in Andorra. However, we know that prevention is key, in particular among young people. Therefore, last year the Ministry of Health, Welfare, Family and Housing, together with the Andorran UNICEF Committee and local youth departments, began a programme of public prevention campaigns. This year we have increased these efforts with the distribution of educational materials and the holding of seminars with groups that work with young people, such as teachers, instructors and sports coaches. The objective is for those individuals to develop the necessary capacities to respond to young people's questions concerning HIV/AIDS and thus help eliminate major taboos and false information concerning the disease.

Similarly, we have set up a webpage which, in clear and direct language, informs young people about the disease and provides them with a contact address which they can reach anonymously.

The Principality of Andorra has always promoted quality education and has always guaranteed schooling for all children up to the age of 16 years. The education law guarantees free and mandatory education between the ages of 6 and 16.

I am proud to report now that the entire population of children between the ages of 3 and 16 is attending school. I would also stress that the educational structure in Andorra is multidisciplinary. Three education systems make up the public education network: the Spanish education system, both religious and secular, the French education system and the Andorran education system.

Quality education must be the primary tool for protecting children from abuse, exploitation and violence. In 2004, Andorra signed the Optional Protocols to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in 2005 we reformed the penal code to bring it in line with the Optional Protocols. Among other measures, we set the age of 18 years as the age when one can be tried as an adult. We codified crimes such as child prostitution and pornography and established a policy for intervening in cases where minors are in danger which involves all individuals who come in contact with a minor who is at risk, including doctors, teachers, and personnel of childcare facilities and other institutions. We have also set up machinery for effective coordination.

Finally, we have established a specialized multidisciplinary team to insure protection for those minors who are in dangerous situations. In Andorra we have a population of 83,000 and overall we believe that working in teams and working closely together will provide greater protection for children living in risky situations.

Despite all of these developments, we must remain alert and not let our guard down. We must continue to work to insure the development of the Convention and the strategy and we must continually improve on existing mechanisms. Protecting the rights of children and building a world fit for children are goals which countries must never, ever fail to achieve.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Sophia Simba, Minister for Community Development, Gender and Children of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Ms. Simba (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation is pleased to participate in this Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children. We congratulate the President of the Assembly on the organization of the meeting and look forward to fruitful deliberations that will provide more insight into our quest to make a world fit for children a reality. We also wish to thank UNICEF for the support it has provided in the preparations for this meeting. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by Ms. Alima Mahama, Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs of Ghana, on behalf of the African Union.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania attaches great importance to children's participation and consults children on various issues that affect them. In order to underscore that commitment, our delegation includes three children. We thus welcome the convening of the Children's Forum and the opportunity that is given to children to address the Assembly. It is imperative that we listen to children, involve them and address their needs and concerns together with them.

As we review the implementation of "A world fit for children", we are encouraged that overall some notable achievements have been made. Tanzania has made progress in the implementation of "A world fit for children". Some of our notable achievements include the increased enrolment of children and the attainment of gender parity in primary education. That has caused us to reach the Millennium Development Goal on education well before the target date of 2015. The health of children under 5 years of age has been improving as a result of several initiatives, including the provision of micronutrients, including vitamin A, implementation of child survival protection — a development programme — an expanded programme for immunization, the integrated management of childhood illnesses, the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS, breastfeeding and malaria control and treatment.

The Government has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols — one on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, and the other on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Government is in the process of enacting a comprehensive children's act that will insure that our international commitments on children are reflected in national legislation.

The enactment of improved legislation, such as the employment and labour relations act of 2004, that, among other things, incorporates International Labour Organization standards on abolishing the worst forms of child labour, has further improved the well-being and rights of children.

Poverty remains the underlying constraining factor in many of the unfavourable situations facing Tanzanian children, as well as in increasing their vulnerability. Breaking the cycle of poverty is therefore the critical factor and is the major challenge that has to be overcome in our quest to make Tanzania fit for children.

We have incorporated the goals and targets of our commitment to A world fit for children into the main text of Tanzania's national strategy for growth and reduction of poverty and the Zanzibar Strategy for the reduction of poverty. These are the overarching strategies for our national development planning and will insure that issues involving children are monitored and evaluated and that resources are provided for.

Violence against children, in particular, sexual exploitation and abuse, remain major concerns for our Government. Several measures to combat violence and sexual exploitation against children have been put in place, including the enactment of a sexual offenses special provision act, which provides punishment to perpetrators of sexual crimes and violence against

children. We have also undertaken legislative and non-legislative efforts to protect children from work hazards and from the worst forms of child labour. Tanzania welcomes and supports the appointment of a Special Representative for Violence against Children. We believe that this will add new impetus to our global efforts to combat violence against children.

Despite the achievements, we are faced with numerous challenges before the rights of all children in Tanzania, in particular the poorest and most vulnerable, can be guaranteed. We reiterate the importance of international cooperation and call for international partnership and assistance, including debt forgiveness, to mobilize available resources to address the concerns of children and make the world, and indeed Tanzania, fit for children.

In Tanzania there is high political commitment on the part of its leadership to implement and achieve the goals and objectives of the A world fit for children. We note, however, that Governments alone cannot make the world fit for children. Partnerships and collaborative efforts at all levels with other Governments, local communities and non-governmental organizations and the private sector, as well as international organizations, are imperative in our endeavour to improve the well-being of children.

At this juncture, we wish to acknowledge with gratitude the support that we have received from our development partners, our friends and civil society organizations. We urge them to continue their support.

Finally, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania reaffirms its commitment to making the concept of a world, and indeed a Tanzania, fit for children a reality. We are ready and willing to work with the international community to that end. In this partnership, the role of the United Nations in providing a platform for advocacy, setting standards for the protection and advancement of children and mobilizing support is indispensable.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Virgilia Dos Santos Matabele, Minister for Women and Coordination of Social Affairs of Mozambique.

Ms. Dos Santos Matabele (Mozambique) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, on behalf of the Republic of Mozambique and on my own account, I join previous speakers in expressing heartfelt condolences to the brotherly people of Algeria on the tragedy that struck their country this morning.

Mozambique's participation in this important meeting attests to its Government's renewed commitment to the lofty ideals of the United Nations and to continuing to strive to promote and protect children's rights. Mozambique has a population of approximately 21 million, 11 million of whom are children. To ensure the well-being of those children, the Mozambican Government has stepped up its efforts to ensure that they can fully exercise their rights.

In 2005, the new constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, which unequivocally protects children's rights, entered into force. The Government has adopted draft laws on the protection of children, on the organization of hostels for minors and on human trafficking. The adoption of the family law and of the civil registry code, which extends the deadline for registering family members free of charge, is also an example of our commitment in this area.

In the field of education, we are pleased to report an expansion in our school system network, an increase in school enrolment, particularly among girls, and an improvement in the quality of our education, achieved through the adoption of a strategy to make school environments child-friendly. The tuition exemption for primary school enrolment is one of the most important measures taken by the Mozambican Government to guarantee that all children have access to education.

In the area of health, there has been an improvement in access to health care by mothers and children as a result of the expansion of health care services, the increase in and enhancement of facilities for assisted childbirth, and additional comprehensive children's health-care services.

With regard to HIV/AIDS, we highlight significant advocacy efforts as well as initiatives to combat and prevent the stigmatization and discrimination associated with that disease. In 2005, we launched a global campaign to combat HIV/AIDS in order to enhance the progress already made.

Recently, the Mozambican Government approved a second report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which will soon be submitted to the United Nations.

As we assess the efforts made since the holding of the special session on children, we are encouraged by the success that has already been achieved. At the same time, we believe that we must redouble our efforts to achieve concrete results that will have an immediate impact on children's lives. We have a collective obligation to improve our cooperation through programmes that will enable us to guarantee the well-being of children so that they feel that they are an integral part of the community and that they own their future. We urge Governments and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to redouble their efforts to ensure the protection of children's rights, particularly the right to survival, protection and development, as well as children's participation in issues that directly concern them.

To conclude, I should like to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of Mozambique to intensify its efforts to ensure that all Mozambican children will some day realize their dream to live, play and study in a world of peace and prosperity, free of hunger, poverty, deprivation and illiteracy; a world where there is no lack of schools, hospitals, drinking water and housing; a world without violence, sexual abuse of minors and exploitation. In that way, our children will be able to grow up in a world increasingly fit for children.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Victorina Espínola de Ruiz Díaz, Minister of Childhood and Adolescents of Paraguay.

Ms. Espínola de Ruiz Díaz (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the basis for Paraguay's national goals as contained in our 2001 plan for growth with equity and our national strategy to reduce poverty and inequality. Paraguay has formulated its national policy for children and adolescents with the participation of society and because of the need to eradicate poverty and inequality by promoting and guaranteeing social mobilization to combat the structural causes of poverty. That requires that the State play a different role aimed at guaranteeing acceptable levels of quality in providing services, so as to implement the strategies set out in the national plan of action for children.

We also have two sectoral plans: a national plan to prevent and eradicate child labour and to protect adolescents in the workplace, and a national plan to prevent and eradicate the sexual exploitation of boy and girl children and adolescents, both adopted by decree. We also have a list of dangerous forms of child labour, supplementing Law No. 1657/01, of 2001, through which the Republic of Paraguay ratified Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization.

On 31 May every year, Paraguay observes a national day against child and adolescent abuse, sexual abuse and labour. Likewise, in 2006 we adopted Law 2861/06, which suppresses the trade in and the commercial or non-commercial dissemination of pornographic material using images or other representations of minors or disabled persons. We have also adopted Law 3156/06, which modifies articles 51 and 55 of Law 1266/87, on civil registry, to permit the free and universal registration of children within the framework of the national registry and identity card plan in order to eliminate existing barriers. Thus, children can exercise their right to an identity and thus to a name, a family and a nationality and their right to be proud Paraguayans.

The principles established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child are the underpinnings of article 54 of the national constitution currently in force, which establishes that the family, the society and the State have the obligation to guarantee that children develop in a harmonious and comprehensive fashion, and that they can fully enjoy their rights.

The national system to fully protect and promote the rights of children and adolescents is part of a well-coordinated group of competent bodies charged with preparing and monitoring the implementation of the national policy to ensure the full enjoyment of rights for children and adolescents in Paraguay. This system governs and brings together programmes and actions at the national, departmental and municipal levels in accordance with Law 1680/01: the Code on Children and Adolescents.

One important aspect is the participation of children and adolescents in matters concerning the exercise and enjoyment of their rights through national, departmental and municipal councils for children and adolescents, through international congresses and national, departmental and municipal forums, whether as members of each one of these bodies or as part of the Latin American Network for Children and Adolescents. One of the strategies established in the national policy of action for children is strategic

alliances to involve civil society and non-governmental organizations, and to bring about international cooperation in order to meet the central challenge of improving the living conditions of Paraguayans by sustainably increasing investment in social programmes in 2006. That is how projected investments in social programmes for 2008 correspond to 50 per cent of the country's general public expenditure budget.

The implementation of programmes for children and adolescents set up by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Well-being is well under way. This includes a programme for integrated care of prevalent childhood illnesses, which involves aspects relating to the growth and development of children, and an expanded immunization programme. This makes it possible for Paraguay to fulfil its commitment with respect to the indicators set forth in the MDGs with regard to reducing infant and maternal mortality rates. We also hope to provide 95 per cent coverage in our national vaccination plan. Similarly, maternal mortality is being dealt with through a national sexual health and reproductive plan which has the strategic objective of improving the sexual and reproductive health of the Paraguayan population through comprehensive and sustainable policies, programmes and projects that ensure comprehensive care for the individual and the community, focusing on rights, quality, gender and equality. Within the framework of this plan, we have begun implementing the "Safe motherhood" programme, which focuses on family planning as well as on the provision of birthing kits.

In order to ensure environmental sustainability, we have two goals related to the environment involving water and sanitation. We are also focusing on combating HIV/AIDS. National efforts both in the public sector and in organized civil society have focused on improving access to antiretroviral therapy and widening its coverage. The Ministry of Public Health and Social Well-being's national programme to combat AIDS provides investment in prevention, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up, with antiretroviral therapy and prevention being important aspects of meeting this challenge.

I must also mention the Paraguay chapter of the I Love Life coalition, which complements the worldwide Lessons for Life and Saving Lives campaigns, and which incorporates Paraguayan State organizations, non-governmental organizations, churches, civil society, businesses and the cooperation of the United Nations system. The goal here is to implement the 1x100 programme, an educational strategy for couples to set up networks with multiple juvenile agents. This constitutes one of the central axes of the country's strategy to prevent HIV/AIDS.

With regard to actions aimed at promoting quality education in order to achieve universal primary education, the Ministry of Education and Culture has set as a State policy the goal of guaranteeing an increase in the enrolment of children in preschool, primary and middle school. Another relevant objective proposed by the Paraguayan Government has been to eradicate illiteracy among members of the population aged 15 and above, with a view to developing actions provided for in the National Literacy Plan 2004-2008.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is implementing education reform as a State policy by increasing attendance at preschool, primary and middle school levels — which in rural regions largely exceeds attendance in urban areas — as a result of the requests of families and communities, it being the case that the greatest percentage of the school population is taken care of by public sector institutions.

I would also mention that there is increased attendance in the education system that has permitted us to raise the average number of years of studies and to reduce illiteracy rates, thereby meeting the following principal challenges: making preschool and third-cycle primary school attendance universal; sustainably increasing the provision of middle school education; reducing the repeat rate, especially at the primary school level; reducing the dropout rate in the third cycle of primary school and in middle school; increasing student retention and performance; improving quality, efficiency and fairness in the education being offered, at all levels.

Another important aspect is gender equality among the literate population as well as programmes that contribute to the improvement of conditions for educating boys and girls in the neediest sectors.

With regard to providing protection against abuse, exploitation and violence, Paraguay is developing actions to raise awareness of violence on the public agenda and to promote thereby a culture of proper treatment, in accordance with human rights standards for children and adolescents, and by implementing programmes that focus on sensitization

and awareness in the family, schools and the community.

We have strengthened networks to provide timely, respectful, efficient and comprehensive care in order to fundamentally avoid repeat victimization in all cases. We have also set up a programme called Fono Ayuda — Phone Help — which provides girls, boys and adolescents with free telephone counselling specializing in psychological and legal advice in the event of mistreatment, sexual abuse, sexual or labour exploitation and other violations of children's rights, as well as lending them a sympathetic ear in the face of concerns arising from their experience of daily life.

By agreement with some international organizations, we have also set up a web page, *www.paraguayosdesaparecidos.com*, to facilitate the search for Paraguayans who have disappeared, and have organized a campaign called "Red Card for Abusers". All of this has been done in collaboration with civil society and international cooperation, particularly with the United Nations system, in which the constantly present cooperation of UNICEF is noteworthy. Similarly, we have implemented programmes in various cities to prevent and provide comprehensive care for children and adolescents who have been victims of sexual commercial child exploitation. We have set up national and community networks for protection against mistreatment and all other types of child abuse.

Challenges have determined the design of employment policies and economic growth and resulted in greater provision of resources to highly vulnerable sectors such as indigenous groups and rural populations. We have been able to measure efficiency and better manage our priority programmes while assessing the resulting impact in accordance with Paraguay's commitment to continue to progress in its development of policies, plans, projects and programmes that respond efficiently to the challenge of guaranteeing the rights of children. At the same time, my country is insuring comprehensive development, equality, health care, education and social protection with the aim of building a Paraguay that is fit for children and adolescents.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Hajia Saudatu Bungudu, Minister of Women's Affairs and Social Development of Nigeria.

Ms. Bungudu (Nigeria): Before I deliver my statement, may I, on behalf on the Government and the people of Nigeria, express Nigeria's deepest sympathy to the people of Algeria over the bomb blast that brought the lives of many innocent Algerians to their untimely end. May the souls of the departed rest in peace.

It has indeed been a delight to see the President of the General Assembly presiding over this Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children. On behalf of the Government and People of Nigeria, I congratulate Mr. Kerim and the entire Bureau on their election to guide the affairs of the Assembly. I am convinced that, with Mr. Kerim's undoubtedly rich experience and competence, he and the Bureau will bring the entire proceedings of this special meeting to a successful outcome.

My statement will focus essentially on the agenda items before this special meeting on children. Naturally, the thrust of our deliberations is germane to me as a mother. My delegation aligns itself with the thrust of the African perspectives on children, presented earlier by Her Excellency Alima Mahama, Minister for Women and Children's Affairs of the Republic of Ghana, who ably represented the Chairman of the African Union.

Nigeria believes that the future survival of mankind depends on how effectively Governments implement programmes and policies aimed at safeguarding, nurturing, educating and protecting children from the cradle up to adolescence. Indeed, that was why Nigeria joined other Member States to adopt a Declaration and Plan of Action on the overall well-being and protection of the rights of children at the World Summit for Children in 1990.

Nigeria also reaffirmed its commitment to the emergence of a world fit for children and the strategic goals which were mapped out at the World Summit for Children to improve the situation of children all over the world. At the regional level, Nigeria is not only a signatory to the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child but also espouses the African Common Position on an Africa fit for children.

Nigeria has demonstrated its resolve to achieve the goals spelt out in the outcome document by assimilating the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into its national laws with the

adoption of the Nigerian Child Rights Act in July 2003. Nineteen out of the 36 states of the Federation have adopted the Child Rights Act. A number of states have also enacted specific laws for the protection of the rights of children. The Child's Rights Act has also been simplified and translated into major Nigerian languages for ease of advocacy and dissemination. Moreover, the Millennium Development Goals have been incorporated into Nigeria's medium term development plan, which we call NEEDS. These initiatives envision a sustainably improved condition for the Nigerian child now and in the future.

With regard to children's access to education, a universal basic education project has been relaunched. Completion rates in primary schools have increased, reaching 94 per cent in 2004. Compulsory basic education has also been extended to include junior secondary schools.

With regard to the HIV/AIDS scourge, Nigeria's commitment to confront this pandemic is unquestioned. The country launched a global campaign in November 2005 entitled Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS, in order to refocus the global AIDS agenda on children. This initiative has provided another platform for urgent and sustained programmes, advocacy and fund-raising to limit the impact of HIV/AIDS on children and halt the spread of the disease. Indeed, the campaign provided a child-focus framework for country-level programmes that are currently making a difference in the lives and life expectancy rates of children affected by HIV/AIDS. Nigeria is currently in the process of enacting legislation to make stigmatization, discrimination and the violation of the human rights of those living with HIV/AIDS an offence punishable in law.

A national plan of action on orphans and vulnerable children, based on the Plan of Action of "A world fit for children" has been launched. The Government is partnering with international development agencies and other stakeholders to provide health care and educational support for orphans and vulnerable children in the country. A conditional cash transfer system also ensures that children from poor families have access to basic education.

Nigeria is in partnership with United Nations agencies and other stakeholders to implement the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children. The study is being disseminated to civil society to ensure a multidimensional approach to confronting violence against children. Law enforcement capacity is being enhanced to enable law enforcement agents to handle cases involving children in conflict with the law.

To stem the tide of child trafficking, Nigeria enacted the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act of 2003. The law also established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, which is charged with the responsibility to check the scourge of human trafficking and child labour. Nigeria has entered into bilateral and multilateral agreements to curb cross-border trafficking in children.

With regard to the necessity of involving children in matters concerning them, the national Children's Parliament, which was inaugurated in 2000, has been replicated in all the states of the Federation and in the Federal Capital Territory. This platform ensures that children are able to participate in national, regional and international discourse and programmes about their survival and development and the protection of their human rights and security.

That progress notwithstanding, the Government is still faced with numerous challenges. A few examples must suffice here, due to time constraints: unacceptably high infant mortality and under-five mortality rates; poverty and its after-effects; the challenge of providing infrastructure for universal basic education and junior secondary school; child and baby trafficking; the challenge of HIV/AIDS and its debilitating consequences; and the challenge of logistics support and technical assistance.

Finally, my Government hereby calls on the international community and development partners to foster ever-closer partnerships with all States Members of the United Nations to monitor progress made since the 2002 special session on Children. This would certainly enable us to offer a scaled-up response to the maximum extent possible. Our gratitude goes to our development partner agencies and the relevant United Nations organizations, and particularly UNICEF, for their collaboration with Nigeria on questions relating to children. Of course, it goes without saying that attaining the goals of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015 on the one hand and attaining the targets set in "A

world fit for children" on the other are mutually reinforcing. Let us seek practical and urgent solutions to the problems confronting our children. That way, we shall really be constructing a world truly fit for children.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ith Sam Heng, Minister of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation of Cambodia.

Mr. Sam Heng (Cambodia): On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, I wish to express our great pleasure at being here to exchange experiences in implementing the "A world fit for children" Plan of Action (resolution S-27/2, annex). I also express thanks to the General Assembly, the United Nations and UNICEF for their efforts in arranging this meeting.

The four fundamental rights of the child have been stated in the political platform of the Royal Government of Cambodia. Children's issues have been promoted at national and community levels by the strengthening activities of child protection networks to support vulnerable children, as reflected in Cambodia's national and sectoral plans and in the "A Cambodia Fit for Children" document, in order to achieve the Cambodia millennium development goals and the "A world fit for children" goals.

I will list some of the results here. In promoting healthy lives, from 2000 to 2005, there has been a sharp decline in infant and under-five mortality rates, from 95 to 66 and from 124 to 83 per 1,000 births respectively, and in total fertility, from 4 to 3.4. The proportion of deliveries attended by skilled health personnel and antenatal care coverage have both increased. Household access to safe water increased and iodized salt use have increased, by 16 per cent and 59 per cent respectively.

In providing quality education, improvements have been made in literacy, admission rates and primary school survival rates. The primary net enrolment rate is 91.3 per cent. The net enrolment rate for lower secondary school is 31.3 per cent; the ninth grade survival rate is 26.5 per cent; and the number of children aged 6 to 14 still out of school decreased by 7 per cent. Gender disparities in education have shown improvement. There has been an increase in the ratio of girls to boys in primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education and the tertiary level.

In combating HIV/AIDS, the adult HIV rate has decreased from 3 per cent to less than 1 per cent; HIV counseling and testing services have expanded from 35 to 106 sites; and centres offering services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission have increased in number from 2 to 54.

In protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence, in 2004, 90 per cent birth registration had been achieved. Victimized children have been provided protection, rehabilitation and legal representation. Also, there has been an increase in the number of annual arrests of suspected sex traffickers, and of victims rescued.

Landmine awareness campaigns have resulted in a decrease in casualties from landmines and unexploded ordnance from 850 to 450, of which 30 per cent are children.

In summary, although Cambodia is making progress, it still faces challenges in areas related to food security, poverty reduction, education survival rates, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, maternal mortality, gender mainstreaming and child protection. Thus, in order to accomplish the Cambodia millennium development goals by 2015 and to realize a Cambodia fit for children, Cambodia must strengthen and accelerate national efforts in these areas in cooperation with international and local partners.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.